

Ashburnham, Massachusetts

Open Space & Recreation Plan

Update:

Public Forum and Stakeholder
Visioning Session

November 30, 2022





...2021 Open Space & Recreation Public Survey Results

Open Space Survey Summary 2021

The 2021 survey was given out from mid-October to mid-November 2021:

- Online & paper copies
- Town Hall, Library, Ashburnham Market, Farmers Market
- 197 Responses (184 online; 13 paper)
- More responses than past Open Space & Rec Surveys

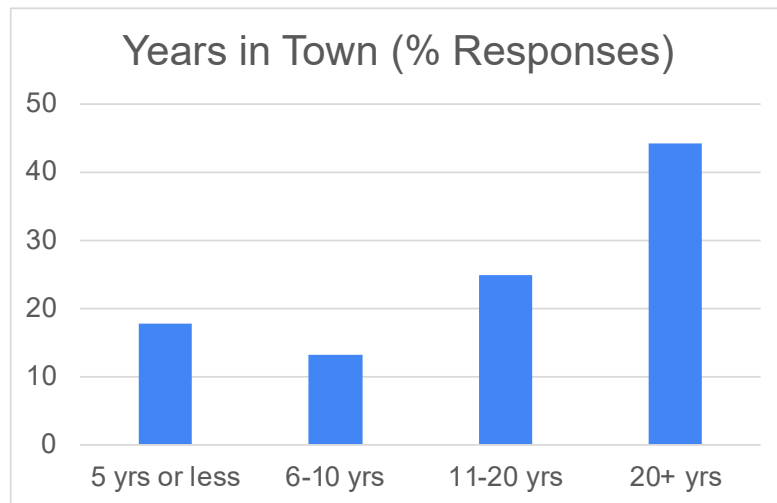


Figure 1. Most respondents (69%) have resided here for over 10 years.

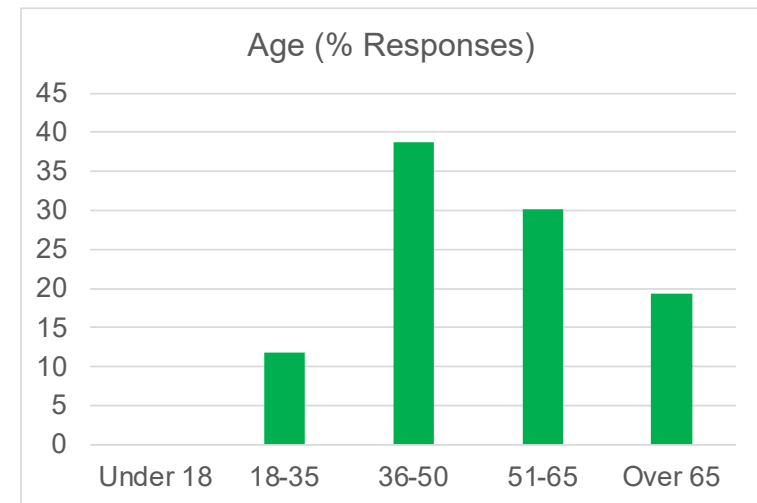


Figure 2. Age distribution (skewed younger than past surveys)

3. Which **recreational activities** do you and your family/household regularly participate in? Check any that apply.

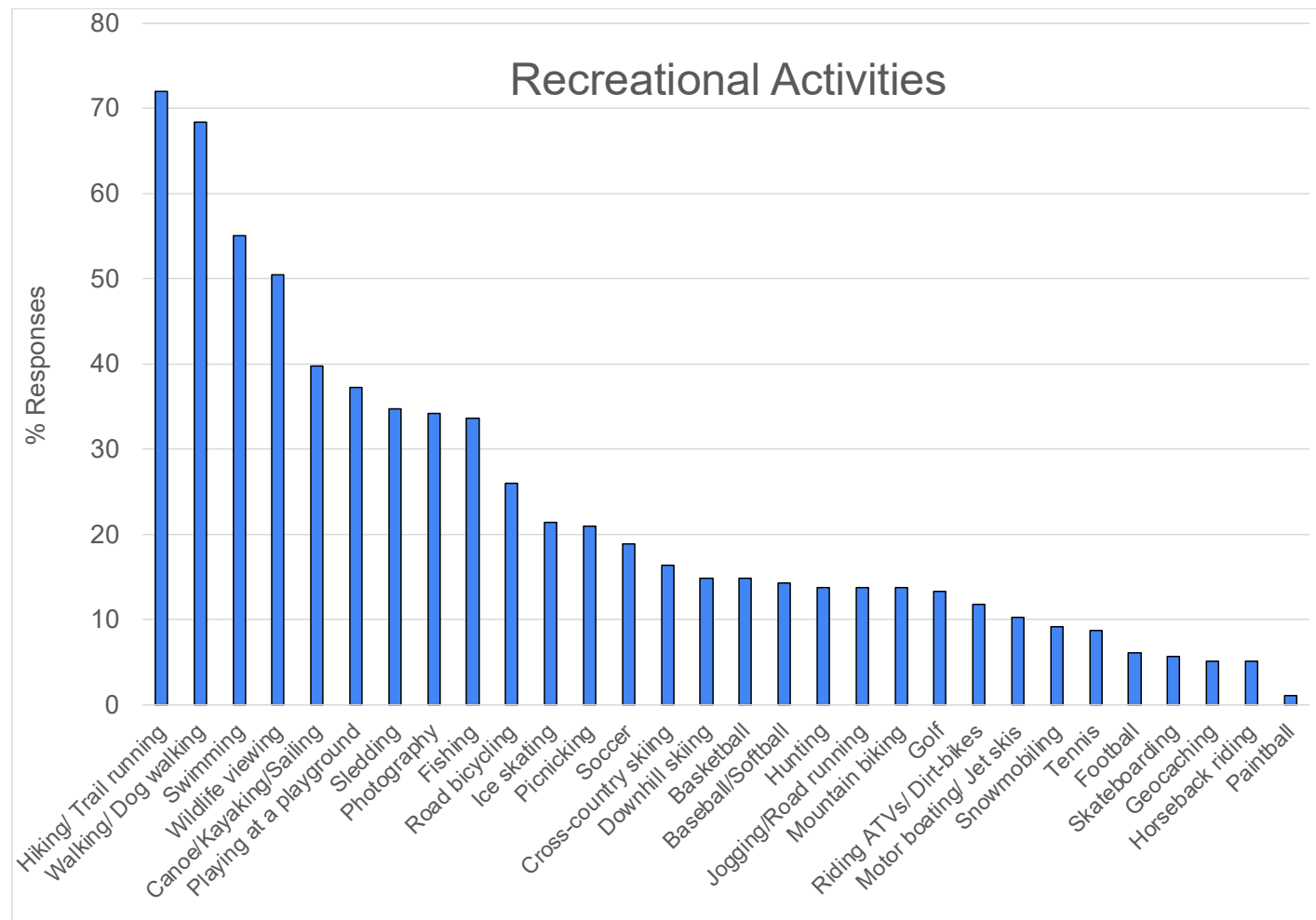


Figure 3. Residents engage in a wide range of outdoor activities. Passive recreation like hiking, trail running, walking, dog walking, swimming, and wildlife viewing were most common followed by Canoeing, Kayaking, Sailing, and playgrounds.

4. Select up to 5 (five) **CONSERVATION LANDS** that are **MOST IMPORTANT** to you (if any).

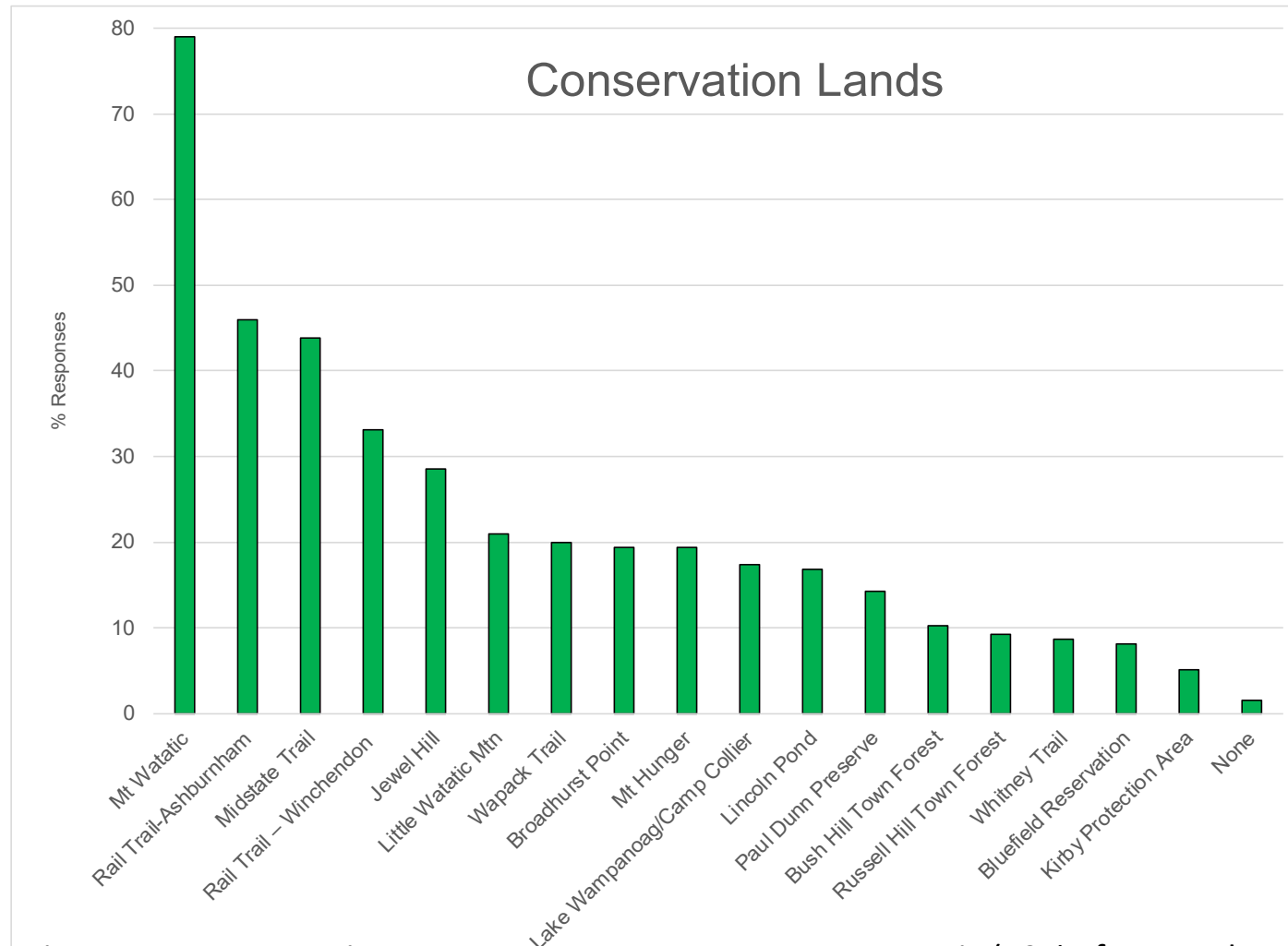


Figure 4. The most important conservation area to respondents was Mount Watatic (79% of respondents) Other important areas included the Ashburnham Rail Trail (46%), the Midstate Trail (44%), the paved Winchendon Rail Trail (33%), and Jewel Hill.

5. Select up to 5 (five) **CULTURAL and MUNICIPAL RESOURCES** that are **MOST IMPORTANT** to you for recreation.

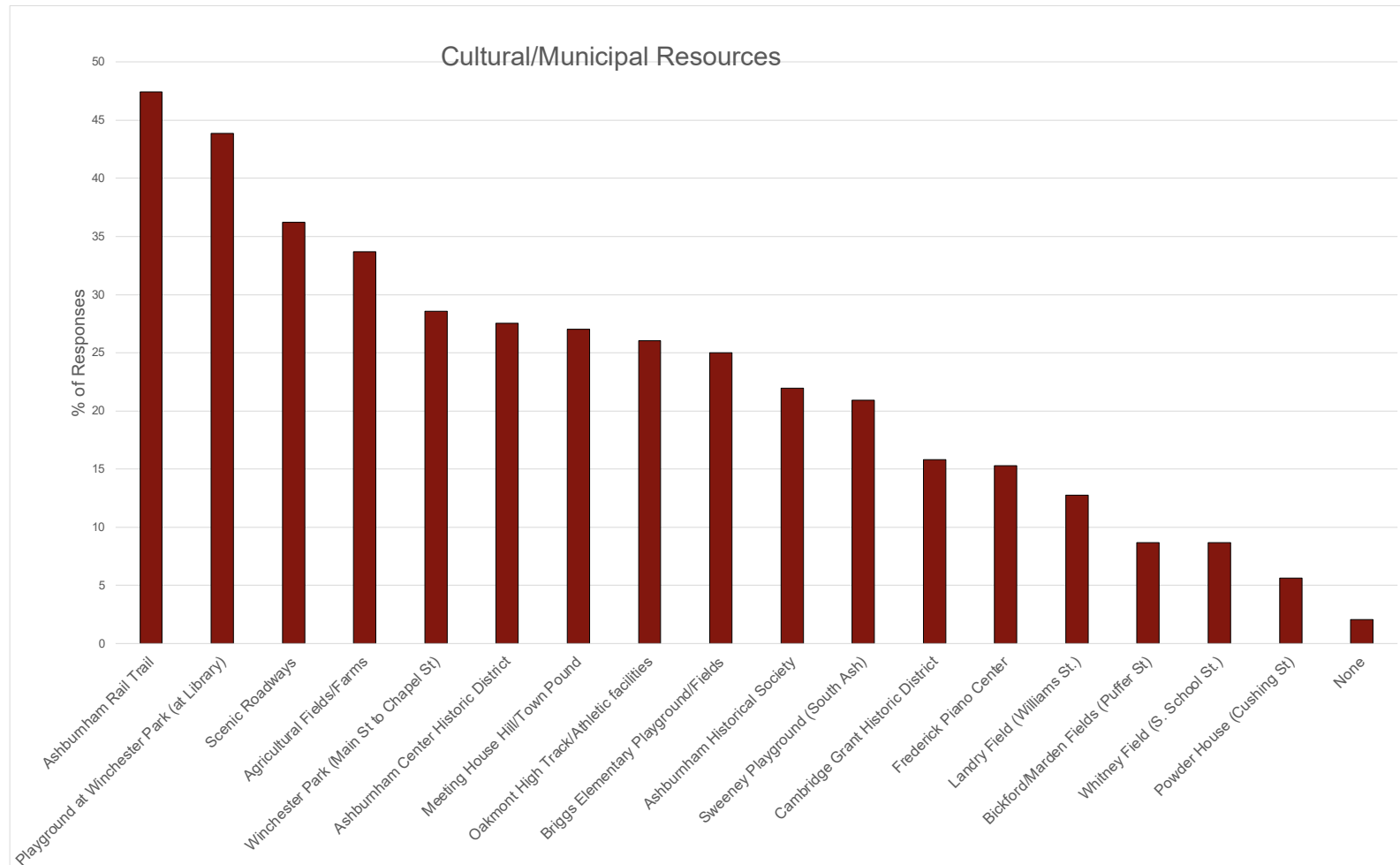


Figure 5. Residents value their local Rail Trail and Winchester Playground as the two most important municipal resources, along with the Town’s scenic and historical heritage.

6. Please help us establish the Town priorities. **Rate the importance** of investing Town resources into protecting, maintaining and acquiring each of the following: Agricultural Resources; Cultural and Historical Resources; Protected Natural Areas/Nature Reserves; and Playgrounds and Recreation areas

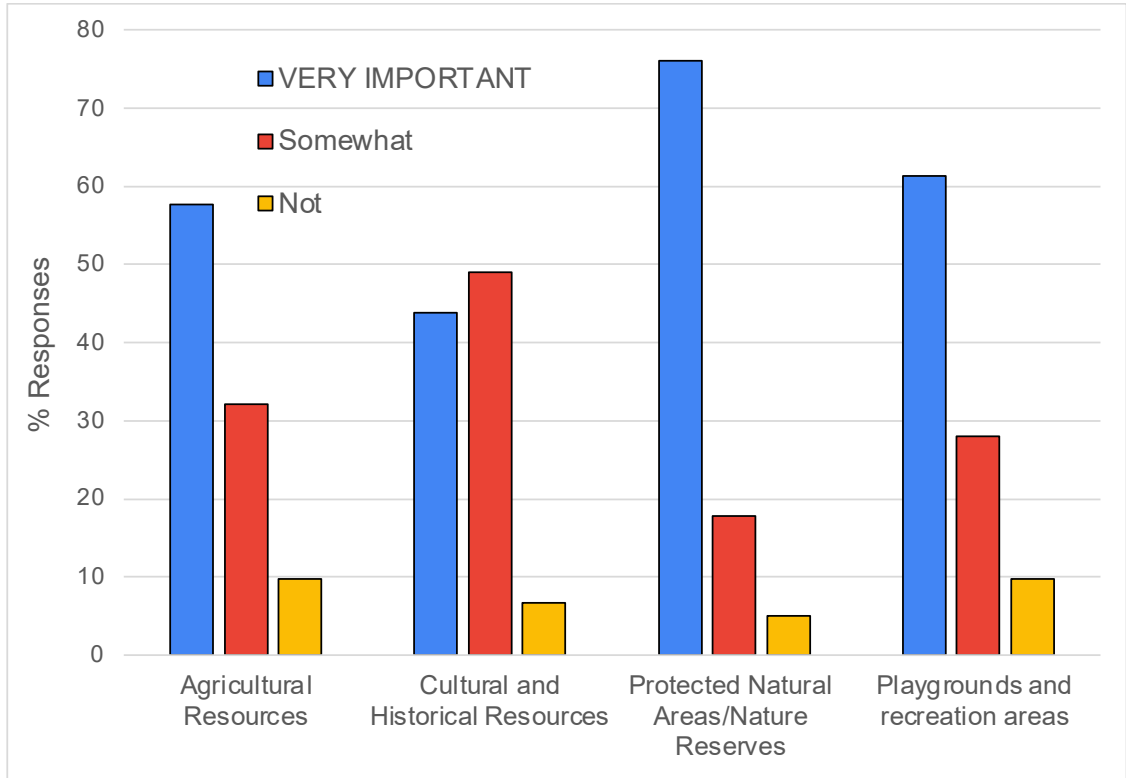


Figure 6. Of these four categories, residents placed the highest importance on protecting natural areas and reserves, playgrounds and recreation areas, and agricultural resources. All categories were considered at least “Somewhat important” by over 90% of respondents indicating that respondents place a high value on open space and recreation in Ashburnham.

7. Which specific open space and recreation resources should the town **PRIORITIZE** for **FUTURE INVESTMENT**, if any? Select only your top 5, at most.

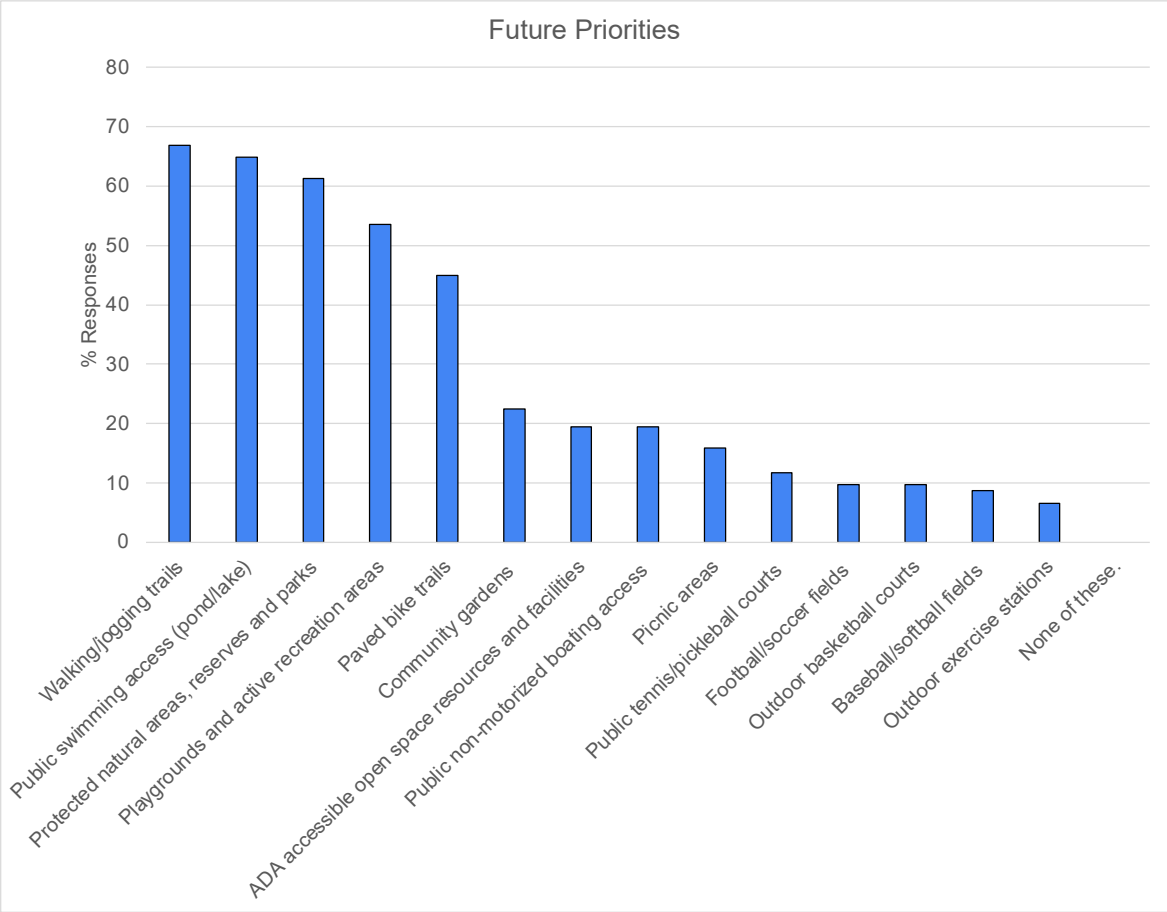


Figure 7. Residents place their highest priorities on dedicating Town resources to trails, to public swimming areas, and to protected natural areas, parks and playgrounds, and paved bike trails. These results are consistent with their favorite outdoor activities (Figure 3) and the high value residents put on conservation (Figure 6).

8. Other comments provided for the Open Space and Recreation Committee.

- There should be an outdoor **basketball court and improvements at Winchester park**
- Public access to swimming and kayaking and **fixing Winchester Park playground** are top priorities
- It's time the town invests in its youth and give the **playgrounds** much needed attention
- Leave **Winchester park** as it is
- Our **playgrounds** need TLC!!!!
- We have **awful playgrounds**. It is sad to know that I take my kids out of town to meet with other people from town to do playgroups. The equipment is old, broken and looks dangerous. Please prioritize the playground equipment at both parks
- We should have **basketball courts downtown** and sidewalks downtown
- **Athletic fields** should be one option, with demand deciding the proportion of funds for each. Our family used both soccer & softball when the kids played; we need to keep all four sports field types available.
- We need a **dog park!**
- **A resource/website** with where all the public space is would be helpful, or if one exists then better **marketing** of it. Most of what we've found has been word of mouth or All Trails.
- Committee needs to be **more active and visible** to be effective.
- We have too many **areas** that are **hard to get to** or use.
- It's important to not privatize all the **lakes**. Specially in the summer time is difficult to find a place where one can refresh specially with kids.

8. Other comments (Cont.)

- I was not aware of many of the outdoor spaces available per this survey or that residents who do not live on the lakes could actually have **access to swimming, canoeing and kayaking** on the lakes. Where is that located and is their parking available?
- **Public access to swimming and kayaking** and fixing Winchester Park playground are top priorities
- We have many lakes in Ashburnham and we have no access to swim or boat or picnic. About time we make it happen
- **Rail trail south ash to north Ash** would connect all the way to Winchendon and southern NH. Roads are no longer safe for walking or biking due to distracted drivers and poor road conditions.
- Please connect the **Ashburnham Rail Trail** (bottom of Willard) to the town center. It is dangerous to bike/walk into town even if it's a short distance to where the sidewalk starts. Paving the Rail Trail is my top pick otherwise.
- We should connect to **regional bike trails/paths**, and especially to the commuter rail in Fitchburg
- Connection trails between states for **ATV use**
- The town needs trails for OHV. Anything that teens can participate in and keep them out of trouble.
- Public hunting access
- Preserve history of Native Americans and African Americans who lived here long ago
- I'd like to see more **parades/pageants/gatherings**. Also other historic markers other than war memorials, like **Native American** contributions, historic buildings etc. Much more **public art installations** and art shows, fairs and events
- **Too much lawn** in front of town hall. Can be much better utilized.
- We must keep Our Town as **natural** as possible!!!!!!!

8. Other comments (Cont.)



- With Ashburnham's limited resources and portions of green space being used for more single-family housing, I think a better use of funds would be for things that promote **more inclusivity** of all ages and abilities, and makes use of what we already have prior to converting more space (more **ADA compliance** to existing sites and resources, maintenance of "active recreational areas" dependent on use and interest to encourage active lifestyles for all ages, **community garden** for collaborative effort that is not only in conjunction with the summer farmer's market on Cushing St. and general "feel" of Ashburnham's demographic, but also may have some positive sway in the eyes of the state regarding green/reduced-carbon/sustainable initiatives come budget season.
- Would rather see the town fix the roads and bring industry to Ashburnham
- Stop wasting tax payer money fix the roads first!!!
- Thank you for your efforts
- Thank you for your time and commitment
- Thanks for caring enough to ask

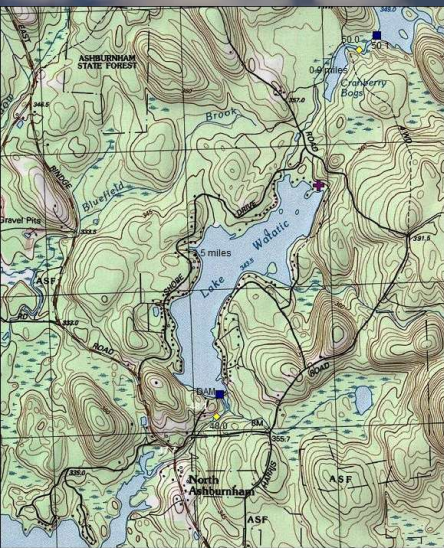
Ashburnhams Open Space and Recreation Resources

Lakes & Ponds

Forests & Agricultural Resources

Conservation & Open Space Lands

Natural Diversity & Ecological Integrity



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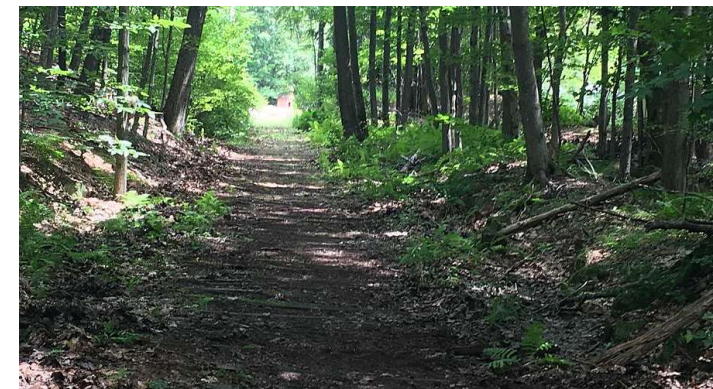


Mount Watatic



Parks & Playgrounds







PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Stakeholder Visioning Session



...Goals, Objectives & Recommended Actions